



Dartmoor Land Use Management Group (DLUMG)

Minutes of the Meeting on 20 July 2026 at the King's Arms, South Zeal following a site visit to Throwleigh Common

Time: 13:30-17:00

Chair: Phil Stocker

1. Welcome, context and opening remarks

The Chair welcomed members and noted the positive site visit to the grazing trial plots earlier in the day.

The Chair updated the group on recent correspondence from the Secretary of State following engagement with Ministers and DEFRA. Key points included:

- Recognition of the importance of DLUMG's work.
- Support for extending elements of DLUMG's work beyond March 2027.
- Potential support for continuation of the landscape-scale grazing trials.
- Confirmation that ponies are intended to sit outside future stocking calculations on Dartmoor.
- Recognition of the importance of flexible and adaptive approaches to grazing management whilst the evidence base continues to develop.

The Chair stressed the need to consider both the legacy of DLUMG and how key workstreams, particularly the trials and governance work, could continue beyond the current project lifetime.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

- David Attwell
 - Andy Crabb
 - Liz Nabb
 - David Slater
 - David Smith
 - Tom Usher
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3. In Attendance

Members and officers present included:

- Phil Stocker (Chair)
 - Andrea Ayres
 - Jez Bretherton
 - Helen Booker
 - Nick Bruce-White
 - Laura Cardenas
 - Matt Cole
 - Kevin Cox
 - Stephen Dennis
 - John Dracup
 - Janet Dwyer
 - John Howell
 - Emma Jones
 - Emma Magee
 - Tracy May
 - Helen Radmore
 - Tom Stratton
 - Tamsin Thomas
 - Ann Willcocks
 - Alex Ångevi (DNPA support/minute taking)
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4. Presentation: Data Mire Project and Commons Case Studies

4.1 Data Mire

Adrian Colston presented the newly developed "Data Mire" platform, created with Ian Bounsey.

The system:

- Brings together historical and contemporary Dartmoor datasets.
- Allows users to overlay and compare habitat, vegetation and condition data over time and into the future.
- Includes digitised information from the Walton/English Nature surveys (1989).
- Enables common-by-common analysis through QGIS.
- Is intended as a practical resource rather than a fixed report.

Members welcomed the initiative and recognised its potential value in supporting evidence-led management and future decision making.

4.2 Penn and Stall Moors Case Study

Adrian presented findings from interviews and research into Penn and Stall Commons following winter sheep removal.

Discussion focused on:

- The social and governance impacts of commons decision making.
- The differing perspectives of active graziers and non-graziers.
- Financial incentives within current agri-environment schemes.
- Potential unintended consequences of payments linked to stock reductions.
- The importance of considering business viability alongside environmental outcomes.

Members recognised the complexity of commons governance and agreed lessons from Penn and Stall provide valuable insights for future policy development.

4.3 Gidleigh Common Case Study

Work is underway to document:

- The history and practical operation of cattle outwintering.
- Impacts on habitat and archaeology.
- Commoner knowledge and management experience.

Members agreed this work could provide valuable evidence regarding traditional and contemporary grazing systems.

Actions

- Explore opportunities to integrate Data Mire with the Observatory/Data Library workstream.
- Consider using Penn and Stall as a worked example within the monitoring framework project.
- Investigate opportunities to gather additional evidence regarding long-term impacts of winter sheep removal.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting (15 June 2026)

The minutes were reviewed.

One amendment relating to comments received from Natural England will be resolved outside the meeting.

Subject to this amendment the minutes were approved.

6. Matters Arising and Actions Update

6.1 Landscape-Scale Grazing Trials

Members reviewed progress since the June meeting.

Discussion highlighted:

- The need for a more detailed written methodology.
- Clarity around livestock unit calculations.
- Greater detail on how monitoring data will inform future decision making.
- Opportunities to strengthen monitoring of soils, seedbanks, ticks and biodiversity.

The group reiterated support for the trials and recognised their importance in informing future adaptive grazing approaches.

6.2 Socio-Economic Study

Tom reported discussions with Jasmine Stanbury regarding her recent Dartmoor-focused research into barriers to environmental change.

Potential opportunities for alignment with the Digg & Co socio-economic work will be explored.

6.3 FiPL Funding

Tamsin reported that a further FiPL application focused on Molinia-related monitoring will be submitted.

6.4 Prescribed Burning

The group reviewed progress following the prescribed burning workshop.

Discussion focused on:

- Supporting delivery of the Dartmoor Fire Plan.
- Long-term maintenance of fire mapping systems.
- Future governance arrangements.
- Opportunities to connect with research being undertaken by Rothamsted and others.

7. Future Agreements, Scheme Transition and DEFRA Correspondence

The group discussed significant concerns regarding the transition between existing agreements and future schemes.

Key concerns included:

- Potential gaps between Higher Level Stewardship agreements ending and replacement agreements commencing.
- Financial risks to commons associations during any transition period.
- Capacity challenges associated with PA2 preparation.
- Risks to participation and confidence amongst commoners.

- Potential impacts on Landscape Recovery projects.

Natural England confirmed correspondence to agreement holders is being prepared.

Members expressed concern that uncertainty could undermine confidence and participation across Dartmoor.

There was broad agreement that:

- DEFRA needs to understand the practical implications of any transition gap.
- Future solutions should focus on desired outcomes rather than simply extending existing arrangements.
- DLUMG should help shape practical solutions rather than solely identify problems.

Actions

- Chair to raise concerns regarding agreement transition risks in forthcoming discussions with Ministers and DEFRA.
- Further discussions to take place with Natural England regarding scale, timing and implications of agreement expiry.
- Develop proposals for a practical transition approach aligned with DLUMG objectives.

8. Single Dartmoor Agri-Environment Framework

Ann Willcocks presented the latest draft.

The discussion concluded that the paper has developed significantly but requires further refinement.

Key themes emerging from discussion included:

Areas of support

- Stronger coordination across Dartmoor.
- Outcome-focused management.
- Better alignment between commons and in-byre farms.
- Improved governance arrangements.
- Greater flexibility and adaptive management.

Points requiring further development

- Clearer articulation of the problems being addressed.
- Distinction between:
 - *governance arrangements; and*
 - *scheme delivery mechanisms.*

- Relationship to the Land Use Framework.
- Governance responsibilities and accountability.
- Integration with wider Dartmoor objectives.

Members agreed that the work should focus on creating a governance and coordination framework rather than attempting to design a new standalone agri-environment scheme.

Actions

- Further drafting to incorporate comments received.
 - Explore integration with Land Use Framework work.
 - Develop clearer governance diagrams and supporting explanatory material.
 - Continue engagement with DEFRA as the framework develops.
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9. Nature Recovery and Land Use Framework

Members received an update following the joint Nature Recovery and Land Use Framework meeting.

Discussion focused on:

- Better integration of nature recovery priorities and opportunities mapping.
- Potential external funding opportunities.
- The need to align all workstreams under a coherent Dartmoor-wide framework.

Members agreed opportunities mapping remains a key component of future work.

Actions

- Continue development of opportunities mapping proposals.
 - Align Nature Recovery and Land Use Framework outputs.
 - Explore additional funding opportunities where available.
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10. Monitoring Framework

Two submissions had been received in response to the monitoring brief:

- James Hutton Institute (Robin Pakeman)
- Foundation for Common Land consortium

Members confirmed the importance of developing a practical Dartmoor monitoring framework that:

- Supports adaptive management.

- Aligns with Landscape Recovery monitoring.
- Is accessible and usable by practitioners.

Actions

- Nature Recovery Group to review submissions.
 - Establish assessment criteria.
 - Appoint preferred contractor as soon as possible.
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11. Communications and Engagement

Members agreed that communication and engagement remain a priority.

Discussion focused on:

- Producing a concise update for commoners and stakeholders.
- Increasing visibility of DLUMG work.
- Wider farmer engagement.
- Building understanding and support for the trials.

Actions

- Draft summer DLUMG update.
 - Organise a farmer engagement event and BBQ linked to the trial site.
 - Continue development of visual and video communications.
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12. New Forest Visit

Members reflected positively on the recent visit.

Particular interest was expressed in:

- Biodiversity Forum governance arrangements.
- Integrated data and mapping systems.
- Citizen science approaches.
- Strategic oversight of habitat management and commons governance.

The model was seen as offering valuable lessons for Dartmoor.

Actions

- Explore opportunities for presentations from New Forest representatives.
- Consider applicability of elements of the New Forest approach to Dartmoor.

13. Any Other Business

Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery

John Dracup advised that Claire Hine will leave the project at the end of August.

Members expressed their thanks for her significant contribution to the project and requested a formal letter of thanks be sent on behalf of DLUMG.

DLUMG Legacy Planning

The Chair advised that work will commence on a business case for:

- continuation of priority DLUMG workstreams;
- future governance arrangements; and
- extension of the landscape-scale grazing trials.

Action

- Prepare business case and future work programme for discussion at a future meeting.
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14. Next Meeting

Monday 17 August 2026

Format:

- DLUMG meeting followed by site visit and wider engagement event/BBQ (details to be confirmed).
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Summary of Key Actions

Governance & Strategic

- Develop proposals to address future agreement transition risks.
- Refine and integrate the Single Dartmoor Agri-Environment Framework with Land Use Framework work.
- Prepare business case for post-March 2027 continuation of priority workstreams.

Trials & Monitoring

- Finalise detailed methodology for grazing trials.
- Review and appoint monitoring framework contractor.
- Explore additional ecological and socio-economic monitoring opportunities.

Nature Recovery & LUF

- Progress opportunities mapping.
- Align Nature Recovery and Land Use Framework outputs.

Communications

- Produce stakeholder update.
- Organise August engagement event and site visit.
- Continue development of communications materials.

Data & Evidence

- Explore integration of Data Mire with Observatory/Data Library work.
 - Investigate opportunities for further assessment of long-term grazing change on Penn and Stall Commons.
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